

Message Text

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TAGS: ELAB, UK

SUBJECT: HIGH COURT DECISION HEARTENING TO MODERATES IN
BRITAIN'S SECOND LARGEST UNION

REF: LONDON 7707

SUMMARY - A JUSTICE IN THE HIGH COURT RULED TODAY THAT
HUGH SCANLON, PRESIDENT OF THE AMALGAMATED UNION OF EN-
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GINEERING WORKERS (AUEW), HAD NO POWER TO USE HIS CASTING

VOTE TO SCRAP POSTAL BALLOTS IN BRITAIN'S SECOND LARGEST UNION. THE POSTAL BALLOT HAS STRENGTHENED THE RIGHT-WING IN RECENT AUEW ELECTIONS, INCLUDING ONE FOR GENERAL SECRETARY (RETEL). IF ITS ELIMINATION WERE "LEGALIZED", IT WOULD HAVE BEEN A SET-BACK TO UNION MODERATES IN THEIR LONG, HARD GOAL TO WIN CONTROL OF THE UNION. END SUMMARY.

1. HIGH COURT JUSTICE WALTON BANNED THE UNION FROM HOLDING ELECTIONS OTHER THAN BY POSTAL BALLOT. HE RULED THAT THE EXECUTIVE'S DECISION (FOLLOWING SCANLON'S CASTING VOTE) TO DISQUALIFY TWO MODERATES ON A TECHNICALITY AT THE UNION'S RECENT RULES REVISION CONFERENCE WAS "FAR TOO DRASTIC A REMEDY FOR THE DISEASE OF AN OVERSIGHT..." HE ALSO RULED THAT JOHN WEAKLEY, WHO BROUGHT THE SUIT TO CHALLENGE HIS DISQUALIFICATION, WAS ENTITLED TO ATTEND ANOTHER AUEW CONFERENCE AT HASTINGS NEXT WEEK.

2. COMMENT: THE POSTAL BALLOT HAS BEEN CONSIDERED BY THE AUEW RIGHT-WING AS A WEAPON IN DISLODGING LEFT-WINGERS WITHIN THE UNION, SINCE THE OLD SYSTEM OF BRANCH (LOCAL) ELECTIONS WERE FREQUENTLY CHARACTERIZED BY VERY LOW TURNOUTS BY THE RANK AND FILE AND HIGH PARTICIPATION BY COMMUNISTS AND OTHER EXTREME LEFT-WINGERS. POSTAL BALLOTING IN THE AUEW HAS TENDED TO MITIGATE THE NORMAL APATHY OF THE RANK AND FILE (WHICH HAS OFTEN BEEN MODERATE), SINCE POSTAL VOTING REQUIRES RELATIVELY LITTLE EFFORT. THOUGH THERE ARE MANY BATTLES AHEAD FOR THE MODERATES, THE HIGH COURT DECISION -- COUPLED WITH THE RECENT ELECTION OF JOHN BOYD AS GENERAL SECRETARY -- IS INDEED HEARTENING TO THEM.

RICHARDSON

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